5 May 2022

The first meeting of the NDIS Mental Health Sector Reference Group (NMHSRG) for 2022 was held on 5 April.

The Chairperson, Dr Gerry Naughtin, welcomed new members and organisations to the Reference Group, and thanked former members for their contributions.

The Chairperson noted the continuing growth in the numbers of people with psychosocial disability coming into the NDIS.

The Chairperson noted there have been three significant developments since the last meeting of the NMHSRG, including:

Release of the Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework (Recovery Framework).

- The endorsement of the Recovery Framework by Disability Reform Ministers
- The release of the Recovery Framework in December 2021
- The implementation of the Recovery Framework will provide clear direction for the management of psychosocial disability in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (the Scheme).

Several Commonwealth, State and Territory mental health and suicide prevention agreements have also been released.

The passing of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Participant Service Guarantee and Other Measures) Act 2022 in March.

- The NDIS Amendment Act includes two significant changes about psychosocial disability. They are:
    - The replacement of psychiatric condition with psychosocial disability in section 24 (1) (a).
    - Revised wording at the end of section 24. It now recognises that a prospective participant’s psychosocial disability which is episodic or fluctuating in nature can be assessed as permanent.

New term of NMHSRG

- The Chairperson noted this meeting was the commencement of the next term of the NMHSRG.
- Updated terms of reference have been introduced.
- Membership of the Reference Group has been expanded to include more mental health consumer and carer representation, Allied Health Professions Australia, and the

Australian Psychological Society.

The meeting discussed six matters:

Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework (Recovery Framework)

Erin Ingham, NDIA Director of Psychosocial Disability and Policy Reform presented on the actions for implementing the Recovery Framework.

Erin noted an external advisory group is being created, and the internal working group has begun work on the implementation of the Recovery Framework.

Australian Government Department of Health – Federal Budget Announcements and the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement

Anthea Raven, Assistant Secretary, Mental Health Access Branch, Department of Health, outlined the mental health initiatives in this year's budget.

She also gave a presentation on the initiatives and additional spending across the five pillars of the National Mental Health Plan.

Anthea spoke about how the Commonwealth and State and Territory funded programs and initiatives have increased their collaboration.

She also noted the Department of Health and the NDIA will continue to work closely together to build stronger relationships and improve mental health services for NDIS participants.

More information is available: Budget 2022–23: Prioritising mental health, preventive health and sport | Australian Government Department of Health

The Report into the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into Mental Health (the Inquiry)

Ivan Frkovic, Queensland Mental Health Commissioner, spoke about the establishment of an inquiry into mental health services in Queensland by the Queensland Parliament.

Ivan noted there has been strong support for this Inquiry due to the level of mental health needs in the community, including the impacts of COVID-19.

Gerry Naughtin noted that the NDIA had made a submission to the Inquiry.

Ivan advised that the Parliamentary Inquiry will finalise its report in a few months.

Emerging issues on hospital discharge for participants with psychosocial disability

Chris Faulkner, NDIA Branch Manager of Young People in Residential Aged Care/Hospital Discharge presented on the work that she has begun on hospital discharge delays. She highlighted the following points:

- People with psychosocial disability represent approximately 50% of people experiencing delayed hospital discharges.
- Her team is working with Local Health Networks to address discharge delays. They are creating systems to help to speed up hospital and NDIA processes if they cause delays.
- She noted the impact of the lack of appropriate housing options for participants, many of whom have complex support needs.
- She indicated that the NDIA is committed to working with State and Territory governments to address these barriers.

Office of the Scheme Actuary Report

David Gifford, NDIA Deputy Scheme Actuary, presented on trends in the Scheme performance.

He provided analysis of the data about participants with primary psychosocial disability at 31 December 2021.

Highlights include:

- The number of participants with psychosocial disability with an active plan at 31 December 2021 was 53,123. This is a growth of 9,673 since 31 December 2020.
- The eligibility rate at 31 December 2021 was 71%.
- Average annualised plan budgets for active participants with psychosocial disability was $78,100, compared with $68,500 for all Scheme participants.

Members' Reports Highlights

Susan Hayward (for Christine Morgan, Chief Executive Officer), National Mental Health Commission (NMHC)

- Advised the NMHC released its Lived Experience Peer Workforce Development Guidelines in late 2021. They are developing a series of documents to accompany this. These documents will include defining lived experience, what it means for employers, and providing guidance for employers on introducing Lived Experience/peer workers into their workforce.
- Advised a Director of Lived Experience has been employed by the NMHC. In partnership with the Department of Health they will lead the development of a Lived Experience peer workforce professional network, and the development of a framework for a lived experience peak body.

Amanda Curran, Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA)

- Noted AHPA is committed to working with NDIA on improving the system and the issues AHPA members are currently experiencing regarding psychosocial disability.
- Issues included: the need to recognise the physical needs of participants with serious mental health issues. The need to consider plan periods which may include fluctuating use of budgets to address periods of acute illness. The timeliness in meeting access and setting plans, and the opportunities to improve information for participants to improve consistency.

Harry Lovelock, Mental Health Australia (MHA)

- MHA has recently appointed a new Board chair.
- Notes the mental health sector has voiced disappointment about the recent Budget and the National Mental Health Agreement. They feel it lacked significant funding, leadership and lived experience expertise about psychosocial disability services and workforce issues.

Bill Gye, Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA)

- Advised CMHA is seeking some small pilot funding to improve the data on the Community Managed Organisation sector, as there is currently little data on this sector.
- Advised the NDIS and Mental Health Conference will be held in Sydney on 20 and 21 February 2023. CMHA is seeking interest for anyone who would like to be a part of the reference group for the conference as well as speakers.

Tamara Cavenett, Australian Psychological Society

- Advised there appears to be a lack of understanding around what psychosocial disabilities are and the associated support provided by psychologists. As well as the difference between clinical/medical treatment and the capacity building supports psychologists provide.
- Suggested there is an opportunity for training and education for psychologists and NDIA staff involved in building and managing plans.

Next Meeting

15 June 2022 1.00 p.m. (AEST) to 4.00 p.m. (AEST).

Attendees

Chairperson

- Dr Gerry Naughtin OAM, Strategic Advisor (Psychosocial Disability and Mental Health)

Members

- Ms Janet Meagher AM, Independent Advisory Council Liaison
- Ms Judith Drake, Consumer Representative
- Ms Kerry Hawkins, Carer Representative
- Ms Lorraine Powell, Lived Experience Australia
- Ms Katrina Armstrong, Mental Health Carers Australia
- Mr Harry Lovelock, Mental Health Australia
- Mr Bill Gye OAM, Community Mental Health Australia
- Ms Anthea Raven, Australian Government Department of Health, Mental Health Access Branch, Mental Health Division
- Mr Kieran O’Brien, Department of Social Services, (for Ms Jacqueline Hrast, Branch Manager Participant Outcomes)
- Mr Phil Watson, Department of Health Victoria, Mental Health and Wellbeing Division
- Ms Christine Morgan, National Mental Health Commission
- Mr Ivan Frkovic, State and Territory Mental Health Commissions
- Ms Jessica Farah, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (for Ms Donna White, Director Behaviour Support)
- Ms Tamara Cavenett, Australian Psychological Society
- Ms Amanda Curran, Allied Health Professions Australia
- Ms Chris Faulkner, Branch Manager NDIA YPIRAC/Hospital Discharge Branch
- Ms Erin Ingham, Director, NDIA Psychosocial Disability and Policy Reform Team

Guest Speakers

- Mr David Gifford, Deputy Scheme Actuary, NDIA Office of the Scheme Actuary

Invited Guests

- Ms Siobhan Carrigan, Department of Social Services
- Ms Susan Hayward, National Mental Health Commission
- Ms Annie Au-Yeung, Australian Government Department of Health

Secretariat

- Ms Anthea Gellie, Assistant Director, NDIA Psychosocial Disability and Policy Reform Team

Apologies

- Ms Shauna Gaebler, National Mental Health Consumer Alliance
- Ms Amy Wyndham, New South Wales Health, Mental Health Branch
- Ms Jessica Walker, Branch Manager, NDIA Agency Policy Branch
- Dr Bill Pring, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

Observers

- Ms Meg Curran, Assistant Director, NDIA Psychosocial Disability and Policy Reform Team
- Ms Joanne Leung, Assistant Director, NDIA Psychosocial Disability and Policy Reform Team

Related articles

Category

- Mental Health Sector Reference Group communique

Mental Health Sector September 2022 Communique

Date

21 October 2022

Mental Health Sector July 2022 Communique

Date
12 August 2022

Mental Health Sector April 2021 communique

Date
15 April 2021
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